

## Duxbury physician heads to Vancouver for winter games

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DUXBURY—After years of competitions, he made the team and is heading to Vancouver for the 2010 Winter Olympics.

Is he a skier? Does he fly down an iced track in a bobsled? Maybe he pushes a broom as part of the curling team?

That's no to all of the above. He's a doctor.

Dr. Joseph Zabilksi, an orthopedic surgeon who works at Jordan Hospital and his own practice in Duxbury has been named to the United States Olympic Team's medical staff for the Winter Olympics.

He's been part of the medical staff for the United States Figure Skating Association since the 1990s, making trips to competitions both here and abroad.

Zabilksi says he got involved with figure skating when he did a fellowship at Children's Hospital and New England Baptist Hospital with Dr. Lyle Micheli. One of his colleagues was Dr. Mahlon Bradley, who was not only a fellow orthopedic sur-



Dr. Joseph Zabilksi examines the knee of Erin Martins of Bridgewater at his office in Duxbury. Zabilksi is heading to Vancouver as part of the U.S. Olympic team's medical staff.

STAFF PHOTO/MATTHEW NADLER

geon, but had been a competitive figure skater.

Bradley asked him to help at Skate America, which was being held in Springfield. The following year he was asked to go to Slovakia for a competition, and with that, he was a regular at the rinks. Since then he has served at world championships, grand prix events and was in Beijing last year for the Cup of China.

The U.S. Olympic team has six doctors, along with associated medical staff. According to Mitch Moyer, senior director of athlete high performance for the U.S. Figure Skating Federation, a short list of doctors, "the best he have," is submitted to the United States Olympic Committee.

Then, much like the athletes, the doctors have to qualify.

Last March, Zabilksi spent two weeks at the Olympic Training Center in Colorado Springs, Col., working with athletes and being evaluated by USOC officials.

The Olympic committee is looking for a mix of skills in selecting doctors, he said, looking not only for orthopedists, but also general practitioners.

While he expects to be spending a significant amount of time at the skating venue, Zabilksi will also

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spend time at the Olympic Village manning the U.S. team's medical clinic. "Each doctor has a primary coverage function."

Like the athletes he serves, he will be staying at the village.

"You're constantly on call for the athletes," he said of his past

experiences at high-level competitions. Major injuries are rare, he said, but he tries to be proactive, tending to the smaller aches and pains before they turn into major problems. Figure skaters can spend up to four hours a day on the ice, which puts stress on their bodies, he explained. Pairs skating, he said, can be particularly challenging, as the two skaters

work in such close proximity to each other. Warm-ups are especially worrisome as four pairs of skaters fly around without much regard for where everyone is. "You don't relax when pairs are out there," he said.

A football player at Boston College, Zabilksi had no previous experience with figure skating before he joined its

medical staff, but he's gained an appreciation for the sport, noting the "degree of athleticism, combined with the form and beauty of what they're doing."

Off the ice, he's struck by "how normal these kids are. They kind of hang together. They're just regular kids. That to me that impressed me the most."

# Doctor Olympus

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